IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 1-3, 5, 7-12, and 19-27; add Claim 28; and substitute Claims 4 and 6 with the following amended claims. Marked-up copies of the amended and new claims are included at the end of the amendment.

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4. A system for determining eligibility of a participant in an insurance plan with respect to particular dental procedures performable by a dental care provider comprising:

- at least one computer having at least one data storage means, at least one input means, and at least one output means;

- data pertaining to at least one participant stored in at least one database on the data storage means of a first of said at least one computer wherein at least a portion of said data is not locally stored on said first computer;

- means associated with the at least one computer for determining eligibility of the participant in real time comprising:

  - means for inputting a participant identifier;

  - means for inputting a particular procedure necessitated by a participant;

  - means for searching the participant data stored in the at least one data storage means for the participant identifier; and

  - means for providing the participant stored data pertaining to the participant identifier ~~to the output means of the~~ at least one computer, to, in turn, provide data as to the eligibility of a participant ~~for a particular procedure;~~

- said input means being associated with ~~at least said first~~ computer for inputting an inquiry requesting information pertaining to said particular dental procedure in order to access said participant data in real time and determine eligibility for said procedure in real time prior to providing said procedure without the need to send participant's data to said first computer from said data storage means in advance of said determination; and

- means associated with the at least one computer for recording utilization of benefits by the dental provider in real time.

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6.   The system of claim 4 wherein the means for inputting a particular procedure necessitated by a participant comprises means for inputting at least a procedure code, a tooth identification, and a positional identification as applicable to said procedure.

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28.   The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of: accessing the inputted performed procedure data in real time.

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested. Applicant has addressed every ground for rejection in the Office Action dated January 3, 2003, Paper No. 20, and believes the application is now in condition for allowance.

Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. In particular, the Examiner found that there was no antecedent